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HALL

VERSES

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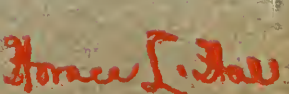
VERSES



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VERSES

The earth is robed in a mantle of white,
Out of the east creeps the still, gray light
Of a winter morn.
Up springs the sun in a glorious blaze;
Joyously let us our voices upraise—
"O, the New Year's born!"

VERSES

BY HORACE
LESTER HALL

LONDON, CANADA.
HUBERT McBEAN JOHNSTON
MCMIII.

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THE FADING VISION.

FIRST thing this morning I heard a red-headed woodpecker calling, and the sound gave me a homesick feeling.

Loud and clear through the open window came the bird's call, and in an instant I found myself transported to a shady grove I know of, where you look one way and see a long stretch of woodland, and when you look the other your eye rests upon a patch of yellow sand, and then miles and miles of blue water.

Above you the oak leaves rustle and the birds riot; beneath you the ants scurry to and fro through the grass. A tent stands yonder, and through the open flaps you catch a glimpse of a couple of camp beds, a table decorated with several disreputable-looking pipes, and something that bears a suspicious resemblance to a deck of cards.

You are lying in a hammock, gazing lazily up at a patch of blue sky that peeps through a rift in the tree-tops; your costume is remarkable for its meagerness, and your frame of mind is one of utter content.

Up along the shore in a dead tree, a family of crows are sunning themselves, cawing lazily at intervals; down at the beach the ripples come in with a dreamy "wash-wash" that is infinitely soothing, and a couple of spotted sandpipers trot energetically along in the sand.

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All this, and then, with a sigh, you realize that the picture is not perfect, for the other hammock is vacant, and one of the camp beds has a lonesome look. Even the deck of cards lacks fascination, and the wet goods in the ice box are neglected, because man is mortal and all things mundane have an end, and, instead of a swinging hammock, a clinking glass, a well-shuffled deck, and the joys of a boon companionship, there is only a grassy mound in the quiet cemetery just over the hill.

H D Carman

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IN AN OLD MAGAZINE.

THE art of letters is the subtl'st art,
And the most broad of all the arts devised;—
Of bibles there are legion to be prized,
Blessing the while old Cadmus; and apart
From all old books that strangely thrill the heart
Like distant lark's note floating from the skies,
Or like a sudden spring day's soft surprise,
There are sweet miscellanies, sweet and tart.
Give me a room (a tiny room), a pipe
And an old magazine; or it may be
A couple, ragged-edged, age-yellow'd:
I ask no greater joy in youth; and ripe
With the accumulated years, I see
The exact, self-same vision, frost-mellow'd.

Aug. 28th, 1895.

A PRAYER TO THE INVISIBLE.

THERE is a God, in nature dwells,
Despite the sceptic's unbelief;
We feel His presence, cast like spells,
In every blade of grass and leaf.

The music of the mountain rill,
The soothing murmur of the pine,
The souls of nature's children thrill,
With consciousness of an All-divine.

The azure sky, low-bending down
To kiss her loving sister earth;
The regal sun with golden crown—
A ray reflected from His earth.

The twinkling firmament of stars,
The soldiers of a higher power,
A brilliant army, led by Mars,
Guarding earth through silent hour.

O Spirit, in whose outstretched palm
The trembling waters cradled lie,
Whose bidding stills wild storm to calm,
Who notes the sparrow's flight on high;

Teach me to see Thy visage dear,
Thy handicraft in Nature's face,
Christ-faith to live this mortal sphere,
So best to win that resting place.

1895.

PREMONITION.

IN a bank of phosphorescent mist,
The sun had hung for a day;
And the mellow light from its blood-red disc
Glowed over the sea, and away
To the polished teeth of the Black Rock Reef.

Not a ripple of air stirred the waters deep
And the "Sea Foam" rode at ease;
'Till the lazy wind, from it's long, deep sleep,
Sprang up and blew a breeze,
In the onimous light of that hazy night.

Then a mermaid came from out the calm,
With her long hair round her cast;
And three times round the "Sea Foam" swam,
'Till the seamen cried aghast
"God pity our wives, and spare our lives."

* * * * *

In a village on a circling bay
Dwelt a bent and aged form;
To-night she stood upon the quay,
And a prayer drifted up through the storm:
"Lord save my Jack, and bring him back."

Then a terrible dread thrilled the throbbing heart,
Rent the air a piercing cry;
And her soul with the angels took part
To plead for her boy with the God on high,
Whilst the ice-cold spray shivered over the quay.

Premonition.

The "Sea Foam" rests in an oozy bed
In the depths of the treacherous sea;
And the souls of a mother and child are led,
From the griefs of life set free,
To praise at the shrine of the All-divine.

Parry Sound, Aug., 1893.

TO AN INFANT.

MOST gracious princess, and most shy I ween,
I homage pay, haste at your least command;
Though young in years—just turning two
—how grand!
A world of wisdom lies beneath the sheen
Of your blue eyes, that cherish yet a scene,
A vague, faint shadow of that mystic land
From whence so short ago you came: God's hand
I trace in those pink cheeks, O princess Jean.
Sweet innocent, were all those tears you shed
Turned into pearls of purest brilliancy,
They were less pure than thy baby soul;
And so I pray that when the years are fled,
And you are old that still your soul may be
As spotless as the pearls that wavelets roll.

May 22nd, 1895.

THE ENVOY.

IN a sun-soaked field that slopes to the south,
Walled in by a thicket bursting green;
In a stumpy field by a brooklet's mouth,
A bluebird glanced in the golden sheen.

The grass grew dank on the streamlet's edge
Where willows gossip the years away;
The bluebird's mate from a budding hedge
Warbled an answer of love and May.

The lessening snow in the new-washed wood
In streaks lay stark as a dead man's shroud;
The trillium threw back its winter hood,
And the bloodroot lay like a summer cloud.

I passed close by in a fresh hedgerow,
And list to the bluebird's song of love,
With the rich, red earth on his breast below,
And the blue, blue sky on his wings above.

The bluebird sang, and I marked it well:
"I come from the depths of spicy glades
Where the boding quiet is like a spell
And the sunbeams play in the tangled shades.

"From the wild morass in the jungle hall,
Of trees where the spotted reptile twines;
By stagnant pools where lizards crawl—
But I pined for the north as an exile pines.

"For the spirit of spring in my breast awoke;
I heard the crooning song of the pine;

The Envoy.

I heard the rills when their fetters broke,
And the old unrest was my sailing sign.

"I come, and my coming no man knows,
'Til he hears my voice on the copse's edge,
'Til he feels the wind from the south that blows,
And hears the plaint of my lover's pledge.

"He hears the lilt of my lover's note,
And finds me near in the hedge hard-by,
And marks the red on my velvet throat,
On my wings the wind-swept blue of the sky.

"A message I bear from the Queen of the South
That melts the heart of the Northland King;
And the north wind flies to his cavern's mouth,
At the gleam and flash of my sunlit wing.

"The north wind flies to his cavern cold,
At the flash and gleam of my sunlit wings,
And the fair, frail flowers of spring unfold
To the soft, sweet song the brooklet sings.

"I feel the wind from the southern fields,
And the love of my mate in the maple high;
The pungent odors the fresh earth yields—
O, the heart and soul of the spring-life am I.

"'Tween the sky and the earth a token of love,
Is the rich red earth on my breast below,
And the blue, blue sky on my wings above—
And the north winds fly and the south winds blow.

"The dog-tooths deep in their leafy dells,
Where the north wind reeled in his last mad mirth,
A-ringing set their golden bells
At my word of truce 'tween sky and earth."

The Envoy.

The bluebird sang, and I marked it well;
And I said, though life mean toil and care,
This feathered thing does an old truth tell,
For Love is alive and the world is fair.

SONG OF THE SCHEMER.

HYE we puff and we dream of the money we'll make,
And we dream of the money we'll save;
And we scheme and scramble and plan and fake,
And sigh for the coppers we gave

To the beggar who stretched out a palsied hand,
And the nickels we gave to the church;
We scheme and we scramble, we plot and we plan,
We toil and we moil and we search

For wealth, and we find it—and what do we find?
Find we anything, friend, we may keep?
While we plot and we plan and we grasp and we grind,
Death slips by, and we sleep.

JULIA ARTHUR AS CLORINDA.

THOU who sett'st the heart's cords ringing,
Thou, O matchless Queen of Passion—
Face and form of thee Clorinda,
Love, the Goddess, sure did fashion.

Gave thy eyes their wond'rous depths,
Gave them fire more bright than fire;
Shaped thy lips in tender curves,
Tuned thy voice into her lyre.

Did she this, and more, fair Clo,
For within she placed the heart
Of a woman, true and tender,
And to earth bade thee depart.

This did love do; and straightway
Her fair rights did'st thou tread on—
See! She withers, shrinks and shrivels,
For her occupation's gone.

MAN MUST GO.

SPAKE in words both plain and great,
One who ruled a ship of state,

When the great guns held their breath,
And the silence told of death;

Spake he then full-well and wise,
Ere the thunder rent the skies:

"Man the guns, boys, yet move slow,
For you know, boys, man must go.

"It may be, boys, your last fight;
You may die, boys, ere 'tis light;

Think of God, boys; think of right;
For our Queen, boys, let us fight.

"Ready all, boys, yet move slow,
For you know, boys, man must go."

Heed this lesson, faint of heart;—
Thinkest God gave you a part—

Part to act out here below?
Shrink not then, and yet move slow.

And what e'er thou find'st to do
Keep this ever still in view:

As the tides that ebb and flow,
Man is here, but man must go.

August, 1895.

ATKINS OF THE PERMANENT FORCE.

["The permanent force of Canada does not amount to thousands, and of those who remain in the force over ten years, the number would probably reach one hundred. At present no provision exists whatever for anyone, who, after having faithfully served for any considerable period, is discharged from the service. Recently, however, several commanding officers of the permanent corps were retired on account of having reached the 'age limit'—or period of usefulness?—and were granted retiring allowances, of thousands of dollars each, notwithstanding the fact that these very officials had been drawing from $5 to $7.50 per diem pay for years past, besides allowances for rent, travelling expenses, etc., while poor Tommy Atkins, not having the honor of holding a commission from Her Majesty, and only drawing the very munificent salary of forty cents a day, gets a paper discharge and leave to walk out of the barracks gates. No retiring allowance for him, and certainly not a very promising outlook to any man, especially should he happen to be a married man with a family."—Correspondence of the Mail and Empire.]

I'VE been in barracks fourteen years to-day—
(An' I 'opes to die if I'm not sorry for it);
I'm a-drawin' of a private's 'ansome pay,
An' a pint of ale to drive away the devil.

My wife she ups and blubbers out just now—
'They're a-drivin' us away to starve or beg!'
Says I, 'We've got the trainin' any'ow—
(An' a beggar draws his ration's when 'e pleases.)

In course we're only Tommies lyin' round,
A-eatin' h'off our bloomin' 'eads an' that like,
An' a-waitin' for the cook'ouse toot to sound—
(Oh, we ar'n't no livin', breathin' human beings.)

My wife says, 'Lor' 'ave mercy on us all!'
An' I says, 'Blawst the 'eartless 'ea'thens, Bessie'—
(There were a time they talked o' 'duty's call,'
An' said as 'ow the nation's 'eart 'ud bless us.)

Atkins of the Permanent Force.

They draws us h'up be'hind the bloomin' square—
'The Gineral's down from Ottawa,' says Larry,
'Inspectin' of the corps, which ar'n't fair,
'Forgettin' as they did to send us notice.'

The General 'e looks straight into my eyes—
''Ow long 'ave you been 'ere,' says 'e to me,
'Just fourteen years to-day, sir,' I replies—
H' its long enough, says 'e. 'We'll let you go.'

I tells me wife that whimperin' ar'n't no good—
(I'm discharged without a penny to my name,
An' there's seven mouths that's clamorin' for food :
Says I, 'A nation's gratitood 'll fill 'em.')

The pensions are for orficers, I'm told—
(Gawd bless 'em they're a-spendin' of their time,
A-trainin' cattle into soldiers bold,
'For Tommy's but a dawg,' says I to Bessie.)

We were 'eros on that day in h'eighty-five,
When they marched us off to fight the bloody injuns—
(An' it ar'n't their fault that we came back alive,
With our 'air in place h'upon our blawsted 'eads.)

The papers praised 'the plucky boys in red'—
(They entertained us on a flat car in the rain,
An' they travelled us with nothink over 'ead—
We took Batoche on forty cents a day.)

They'll be needin' men some day for stoppin' balls—
('An', says I, 'They'll need 'em worse afore they gets 'em,'

Atkins of the Permanent Force.

For Tommy 'e won't 'eed no 'country's calls,'
When they gives him h'only gruel and gratitood.)

'Tommy ar'n't no bloomin' beggar-man,' says you ;
"E ar'n't lookin' for plum-puddin' twice a day'—
'But you bet your life 'e knows a thing or two,
'An' 'e wants fair play an' nothink more,' says I.

I ar'n't short-sighted if I knows myself,
But I don't see no pension waitin' me ;
They shove me off at forty on the shelf—
An' may the Lor' help Bessie an' the kids.

AUTUMN—TWO VIEWS.

City Boy.

HANG the autumn! Spring's my time;
Ain't got blame old stairs to climb
Night and day with coal and wood;
Baseball new an' weather prime,
Marbles, hundred for a dime—
Bet your life a chap feels good.

Blame old autumn, cough and sneeze;
Ain't no birds' nests in the trees
'Cept they're old uns—birds have flew.
Pater's cranky, mater, she's
Most almighty hard to please—
Bet your life a chap feels blue.

Ratty autumn, cold an' bleak;
Feller feels just like a freak,
Scratchy flannels next his skin;
Ding old sky has sprung a leak;
Raking leaves an' dasn't speak—
Gee, a feller feels like sin.

Country Boy.

'Rah for autumn! 'Hope she stays;
'Bout another month of haze
Hangin' over all the land.
Pity city chaps these days,
When the high-hole's singin' praise—
Um! I say, but ain't it grand.

Autumn—Two Views.

Chipmunk rustlin' in the leaves;
Old sun soakin' in the sheaves;
Pigs a-gruntin' in the stye;
Sparrows chirpin' in the eaves—
Sort of spell the weather weaves
Makes a boy just want to fly.

Maples crimson on the hill;
Cider brewin' in the mill;
Beech nuts droppin', sumach red;
Turkey gobler fit to kill;
Warm air on your temples till
You just up and lose your head.

TO CAMP ST. ELMO.

IN the weary, cheerless future,
When beneath some alien sky,
Mem'ry fondly backward to your
Sylvan shade shall fly—
Camp St. Elmo.

And when hearts beat light and free
In the brilliant banquet hall,
My toast shall ever promptly be
'Midst loud applause of all:
"Camp St. Elmo."

Georgian Bay, Aug., 1893.

THE CARRIER LADDIE'S SERMON.

Wi' right guid cheer, 'mid kirk bells peal,
Ance mair we wish our patrons weel;
Tho' chill an' cauld the snaw winds reel,
Our hearts beat higher,
As flint by contact wi' the steel
Brings forth the fire.

The New Year's here, as steeve's a stane;
A sonsie lad—can stan' alane!
An auld man stachers down Time's plane,
Fu' sair, no blythe:
'Tis the auld year, within his skein
A roosty scythe.

A burden on his back he bears,
An' on his brow, deep, carking cares—
His shouthers bend as on he fares—
Hae left their mark.
What is this burden that he bears
Wi' muckle wark?

Ye spier't me what his burden be;—
A'll tell ye frien': 'tis sins o' me
An' sins o' you: the deil's fee
For guid time spent
In teaching us how best to see
A year mis-spent.

Haud, man! Ye canna stay his feet
Nor bring him back,—he's much too fleet.
He's gone intae the swirl and sleet

The Carrier Laddie's Sermon.

O' Time's dark past.
Ye'd better haud yer heid up,—greet
This youth o' caste.

Towmond syne ye startit fresh,—
But, ah, the warl, the deil, the flesh!
They had ye fast in clinging mesh,
Ye warly sinner
To-day, again yer startin' fresh
Ye skelpie-limmer.

An' a' hae juist ane word tae say—
Ye'll tak' the hint on sic a day:
This sermon, a' hae preached—for pay,
Like ony man—
A' rin wi' papers—an' a' pray
Ye'll understan'.

Christmas, 1896.

RAIN AFTER DROUTH.

SOFT sea-shell tints hang in the clouds
That bank on bank lie in the west;
Their frothy line methinks, enshrouds
The dim land of eternal rest.

Tall, heat-faint elms droop their charms,
To catch the sighs that tremble from
The sad-voiced pine, whose palsied arms
Feel for the snows that must not come.

A robin perched with drooping wings
Between the heat-white earth and sky,
His simple plaint to Heaven sings
For cooling shower from on high.

This only, and no other sound
Breaks the dead stillness of the air,
Save when from fields, where reapers round
The less'ning grain, through the white glare.

Their jaded horses urge; or when,
In well-dissimulated wrath,
Outbursting from the brush, a wren
Scolds furiously about my path.

The edges of the dried-up creek
Tall gentians fringe, lifting their paint-
Drenched purple cups as if to seek
The upper glare; All else hangs faint.

From out long, tangled, sun-dried grass
At intervals some insects breathes

Rain After Drouth.

Time cadence; but my heart, alas,
Sees but the drouth, the scorching leaves.

* * * * * *

Soft sea-shell tints hang in the clouds
That bank on bank sink in the west;
The storm is spent; their line enshrouds
The burning sun, and all is rest.

A robin perched in new-washed bower,
Between the steaming earth and sky,
Sings not a plaint for Heaven-sent shower,
But warbles love to One on high.

The sun's departing crimson beams
With gorgeous splendor dye the pine;
A gold-green glamour, as of dreams,
Hangs over all,—and all is mine.

I pass through fresh, damp-glist'ning aisles,
Where noonday's sun turned green to sere,
And sit me down on meadow stile,
And dream; and dreaming lose my fear.

And then, think I, how is it thus—
That simple, soul-less bird the rain
May summon,—may this thing compass—
While all my prayers ease not that pain?

And so I think and ponder deep
A problem that my soul perplexes;
Then in a moment indiscreet
I speak aloud the theme that vexes;

Straight then into my soul there came,
Came like a silent, sheeted wraith,
Came as to purge with holy flame,
Two silvery whispered words—"'Tis Faith."

Rain After Drouth.

Sarnia, August, 1895.

IN THE GLARE OF THE MOON.

YE sobbing pines that wag your heads
In the drear, grey air of the frozen north;
And thou, pale moon, whose silver shreds
Spangle the snow where wolves troop forth;—
Had ye tongues to tell
How the list would swell,
Of unseen tragedies.

His traps all set, a trapper sped
On and on through the ghastly glow,
To a path in a timber growth, that led,
Through stiff, red willows, crowned with snow,
Where a camp-fire bright
Danced ruddy light
On bare black trunks of trees.

His snowshoes' measured click rang clear,
So still was the thin, crisp, biting air;
The snow-white ptarmigan whirred in fear
To copses deep where the wierd glare
Of the moon and snow
On the white below,
Latticed bare boughs of trees.

In the Glare of the Moon.

Swiftly he sped on the cracking crust—
For five long months it had shrouded earth's charms;
The rime-glist'ning limbs of the dogwood thrust
Their new growth up like trunkless arms:
Up through the snow
From their prison below,
To gleam in the glare o' the north.

On the brink of the stream the ice moored fast
To the spider-roots of the peeling birch;
In a dripping coat splashed the muskrat past:
O he's never safe from the trapper's search,
In house deadly damp,
With never a lamp
Save the glow of a fire-fly's wings.

But a light more red than the fire-fly's wings,
Gleamed through the trees in the hollow below;
Faster the click of the snowshoes rings,
Louder the crack of the frozen snow.
O the fire burned bright
In the camp that night,
The heart of the trapper to cheer.

A sound came over the shimmering plain
From away where the timber is tall and straight;
And an echo rose faintly and trembled again,
From the frozen sedge on the edge of the lake.
And far from the right
On the wings of the night
Came an answer through the trees.

The trapper stopped : his shadow merged
With the boding gloom in the ravine's head ;
Merciful God ! how the warm blood surged
Through a heart that thrilled with a sickening dread;
Was the merciless pack
Of the waste on his track ?—
'Twas the wail of a new-born breeze.

The snow cracked again 'neath his steady swing,
But a few more rods, and his camp was made—
But hark !—kind Heaven what means that ring
From the ridge to the left ! A hemlock glade
Where shadows crept dark
Gave back the bark
Of the gathering, starving pack.

O King of the North, spare us all we beseech,
Such a fate in the waste, with the moon shining down ;
A wild, mad race with no goal to reach—
In the rear gleaming eyes, dripping fangs, bodies brown,
Of the panting pack
On the new-made track ;
And the ever-increasing howl.

One moment he paused—and the race began.
Under the trees in the ravine below
No light came through : his shoe as he ran
Caught in the crust : he fell in the snow—
And the curst discord
Of the gaunt, starved horde,
Rang in his ears like a knell.

In the Glare of the Moon.

He struggles in vain in the treacherous snow ;
His snowshoes are buried deep ; God's love !
Must he die alone like a hunted doe ;—
Eyes gleaming below, stars shining above ;—
Eyes like coals
In their socket holes,
Gleaming red in the gloom.

O Father who noteth the sparrow's flight,
Canst Thou hear unmoved those sickening sounds ?
Such a cranching of bones, and the ravenous fight,
And the fetid breath of the foul fiend's hounds.
Horrible howls,
Reeking jowls ;
O God, canst Thou see unmoved !

The King of the North unloosed his seal
Of the woods and the rocks and the plains ;
Rang through the wilderness peal on peal
The red-sashed trapper's evening strains.
O their hearts are light
With the gladsome sight
Of heavily-laden boats.

The shadows crept across the stream,
And the moon rose full and deadly pale ;
One lonely, shattered, trembling beam,
Pierc'd the sombre depths of a pine-clad vale ;—
Scattered bones in the light,
And a skull bleaching white ;
Is he missed ?—God of all only knows.

Sarnia, Dec., 1895.

THE WHITE VIOLET.

REELS the wind on the burning plain,
Drives the sand o'er a desert grave;
O can I bear this eating pain:
Hope lies deep in that desert cave.

Shrieks the wind on the lunging waves,
Flies the spray with the maddened sweep;
Send, kind Heaven, the love that saves:
Hope lies fathoms and fathoms deep.

Wails the wind through the belfry hoar,
Creaks the timber, and dank the gloom;
Help, God, or perish the heart that bore
Hopes that are buried deep in the tomb.

Sighs the wind through the whisp'ring leaves,
Gilded the brook with the gold of the sun;
Comes to my heart on the moist warm breeze,
Hope undefined, of a life not begun.

Whisper the leaves, and I stoop to clasp
Sweet spring flower, violet white:
Earth-born, Heaven-sent.—Faint heart grasp
Hope of Heaven, and love and right.

Sparkles the brook in ecstacy:
Flower sweet, a token thou art
From the God of all, to the earth and me,
Of Faith, springing out of the graves of the heart.

1895.

A LEGEND OF HALLOWE'EN.

IN the drear, grey north, where pine trees sift
The stinging blast of the nor'-west drift,
There dwells in a sheltered, leafy lair,
The grizzled ghost of a cinnamon bear.

O ill indeed for the voyageur
Whose path is crossed by the cinnamon bear;
For once a year—on Hallowe'en—
His bleaching bones may still be seen.

A trapper passed through a willowy dell,
Where puffy, snow-white ptarmigan dwell,
Till the King of the North shall his clasp unfold
Of the rocks and the streams and the forests old.

The trapper paused: in his path was a sight
That turned every hair of his head snow white;
'Twas the skelton of the cinnamon bear
Hugging the ghost of a northern hare!

In the frost-bound north 'tis a legend old;
But the strangest part has not been told,
For the trapper still lives; whom all may know
By his waving hair of whitest snow.

Oct., 1893.

NELL AN' ME.

I'M no great shakes at rhymin',
An' my spellin's sca'ce up to th' mark,
An' I'm on'y a newsboy climbin'
Each night thro' the cold an' dark;
An' I ain't much account to no one,
'Nless it's mother an' father an' Nell—
An' the editor says I'm a slow one,
But I don't think he knows me as well
As mother an' father an' Nell.

Nell's my sister: mebbe you know her?
I tell you she's peaches an' cream;
An' p'rhaps—if you pay well—I'll show her—
You can bet she's as han'som's a dream,
An' you see I'm Nell's big charmer,
An' Nell's my lady-love fair,
An' we play I'm a knite in armor,
An' thet Nell's got golden hair
Like every knite's lady-love fair.

Now you see to be gallant an' great
I've got to buy presents an' such;
So I tho't 'nless I passed 'round the plate
I might'nt be able t' do much.
For I know that on New Year's you folks
Talk's a heap 'bout reformin' an' that;
An' I know I won't hev to coax
Fer a nickel when your purse is fat,
An' you're talkin 'bout good will an' that.

Nell an' Me.

You see it's like this : Nell's a girl
What ain't none o' your common lot,
An' she ain't in society's whirl,
An' she ain't in my little plot.
So you see it's hard to decide
Jest what she'd like best fer a gift,
But I tho't thet whatever I buyed
You'd be willin' to give me a lift—
Cause I know Nell 'ud like a nice gift—

Now, lastly, I'd hev you remember,
If I am but a carrier boy,
I've a heart in me warmer'n December,
An' it feels, same as your's, grief an' joy.
An' I've toted your paper 'bout right,
An' I want to git Nellie a gift,
An' I reckon you'd act on'y white
If you'd gimme a bit of a lift
Toward gittin' my Nellie a gift.

Christmas, 1895.

THE FISHER FOLK.

I.

THERE is a shore, the Huron shore,
Where sands lie stark as spring snowdrifts;
And wavelets lap, and crows explore
For stranded fish in the wreckage rifts.

The fishermen mend their nets all day,
And the black crows walk on the gleaming sand;
And the great waves boom, and the wavelets play
And the fresh sea sleeps in its Maker's hand.

Then here's to them with a hearty stroke,
The fisher folk, the fisher folk!
When the wind's nor'-west their stems dip deep,
And they pull for the nets with a steady sweep,
With a steady sweep and a hearty stroke.

II.

The waves, the waves that beat the shore—
The cold, bleak shore—have restless grown;
And the night comes down where the breakers roar,
And the long, sad sweep breaks with a moan.

The fisherman drags his boat shoreward
And "She'll blow to-night!" "Aye, aye, she will"
On the rising blast is scarcely heard.
And the sad sweep moans, and the breakers spill.

III.

O, Spirit of All, who still'st the sea,
Look pityingly down on the sailor men!
Who calmed the waves of Gallilee,
O, mercy have on their souls. Amen."

The fisherwife prays through the livelong night
And the maddened crash of the frenzied wave
Is the sole reply: a candle bright
In her pane—God knows—some ship may save.

IV.

The lake to-night is as calm as death;
Scarce a ripple kisses the long, damp reach;
The spectral for on the long-drawn breath
Of the dying day, drifts down on the beach.

The fisherman hears the range-light bell,
And the fog-horn out where the shoals lie bare;
And scarce his own boat he can tell,
So like a ghost her sails appear.

V.

The phantom with the beckoning hand,
The vision of our youth and age—
Walks it upon this silvery sand
Where all is calm—nature's the rage?

The fishermen, who ebb and flow,
Mend their wet nets in the fresh breath
Of lakeward breeze, no phantom know
No luring finger they,—but death!

Then here's to them with a hearty stroke,
The fisher folk, the fisher folk:
When the wind's nor-'west their stems dip deep,
And they pull for the nets with a steady sweep,
With a steady sweep and a hearty stroke.

1896.

A TARBOLTON TOAST.

(1759—1898.)

Respectfully Inscribed to
Cawdor Camp, Sons of Scotland.

O the New is but the Old
With the sun a little brighter;
And this Canada's but Scotland
With the skies a trifle lighter.

O the river's but the "burn"
Deeper grown—the wee marauder;
And the lake is but the "loch"
On a plan a few miles broader.

O the heather's golden rod
With a difference in the color;
"Lav'rocks" are but bob-o-links
With their "wyliecoats" some duller.

Cider (stand up!) is but "hame-broo"
With a less delirious flavor;
And a herring is a "herrin"—
Some small differ in the savor.

The Laurentians are the Highlands
With their peaks a little barer;
The Canadian maid's a Scotch lass—
Form and face a wee bit fairer.

O the bridge is but the "brig"
With its span a stone's throw longer;
And Canadian rye is Scotch malt—
Let the deil name the stronger.

A Tarbolton Toast.

O the "lug" is but the ear—
"Lugs" attention! Gospel ca' that:
"Rank is but the guinea's stamp,
And the man's the gowd for a' that."

O the New is but the Old
(Watch your glass, sir—Here's the heather!)
Clink o' glass is clink of glass—
Save the Highlands drink from leather.

O the New is but the Old
And the snow, sir, is but "snaw," sir
(Your right hand—and yours—"lang syne!"
He—the man we toast—was "braw," sir.)

O the gate is but the "yett"
(Jonny Ged's Hole's a quick worker)
And a funeral's a "berrial"
(Wae, sir, Death was ne'er a shirker.)

O kissing is but "kissin"—
Your own lass' lips are sweeter
(Hold—not now—but drink this toast!
You are not in shape to greet her.)

O a cheese is but a "kebbuck"
With its sides the least bit firmer
(Mind the toast—hold up your head,
Drink it deep—and do not murmur.)

O we'll say that cornmeal's oatmeal—
They will both make into "parritch;"
And a rhime's a "crambo-clink"
(You must drink, sir, till you fair itch.)

A Tarbolton Toast.

O a fool is just a "gowk"
And you'll find them the world over
(And the maid's ten times a "gowk"
Who has not at least one lover.)

"Nemo me impune——" (Hands off!)
O the New is but the Older,
And this Canada's like Scotland,
Standing shoulder unto shoulder.

And the "thistle"—not in Scotia
Seek the lov'd old prickly pest;
Westward ho, to land of Maple—
There (spite laws) it fattens best.

O the New is but the Old,
(Come, stand up, sir, wet your "whistle"!)
And Rob Burns belongs to us
Like the sturdy, stern old thistle.

So then, here's a good Scotch bumper
To the Poet—"Janwar" born;
He is Scotia's—he is ours—
Pledge him in John Barley-corn.

BALM: A SONNET.

TELL me, Cleo, is my life for naught
But to live my little span of years,
Smiling with like joy, or shedding tears
When you joy or weep?—The battle fought,
And we are gone, what then?—Shall we find aught,
Shall we then balm discover for the fears,
The griefs and bleeding hearts?—Or must our biers
End everything in sleep?—Is't this we've sought?
When all's been said, and joy 'gainst grief's been measured,
There is not much in life to wish it longer:
The joy—'tis soon forgot: the sorrows cling!
And yet, and yet the faith the while we've treasured
Is the best balm, best recompense; and stronger
At the end, we hear His summons ring.

May 21, 1895.

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